



Johnny Frankenstein Ink on board 14" x 11"

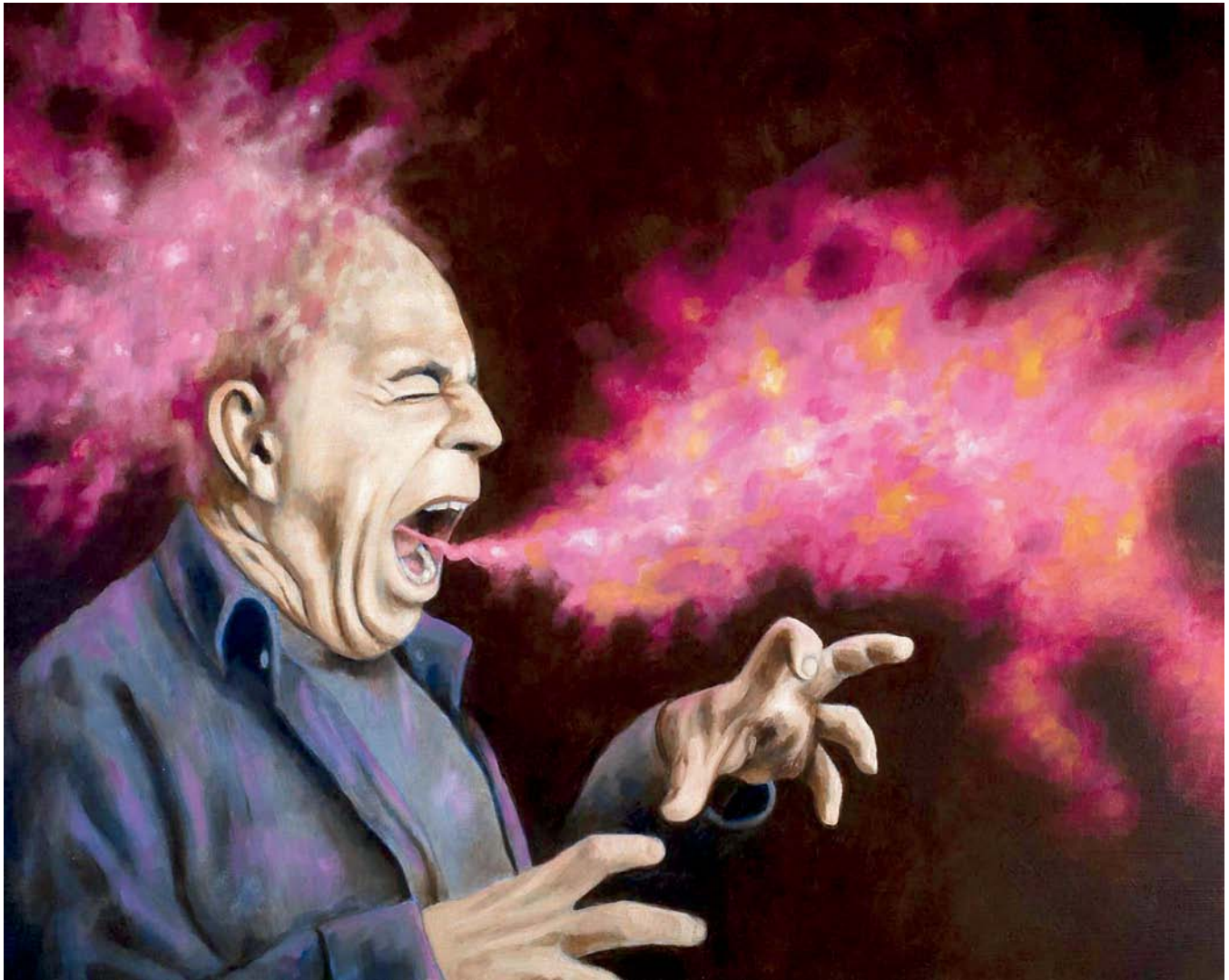
SEAN MADDEN

Artist of the Year 2018

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When it Came Oil on masonite 16" x 20"

Sean Madden

I have been drawing and painting my entire life. Being an artist was my first identity. It was also the thing that set me apart from other people. As such, it's been one of my greatest joys, but it's also gotten me into plenty of trouble. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. I love it.

The trouble started early. In 1967, I was four years old. My mother took me to an art class at a local school. There were fifteen other kids in the class, all roughly the same age as me. The teachers had us making masks out of construction paper and glue. I wanted to make a space monster mask, and I really got into it. My mask had many horns, eyes and teeth. It looked like an orange and red demon. The teacher began walking around the class to highlight the work that the kids were doing. "Oh look, class! Look at the mask that Suzie made. It's a puppy mask. Look, class—

Johnny made a bunny mask. How cute is that?"

The teacher came up to my desk and gasped, "Sean? What—what is this?" She had a puzzled look on her face. The entire class turned around to see. All eyes were on me— instant attention— disapproval— wrinkled noses and raised eyebrows. My face felt hot and red. I spoke up through my embarrassment, "It's a space monster mask." The teacher quickly moved on to a different student.

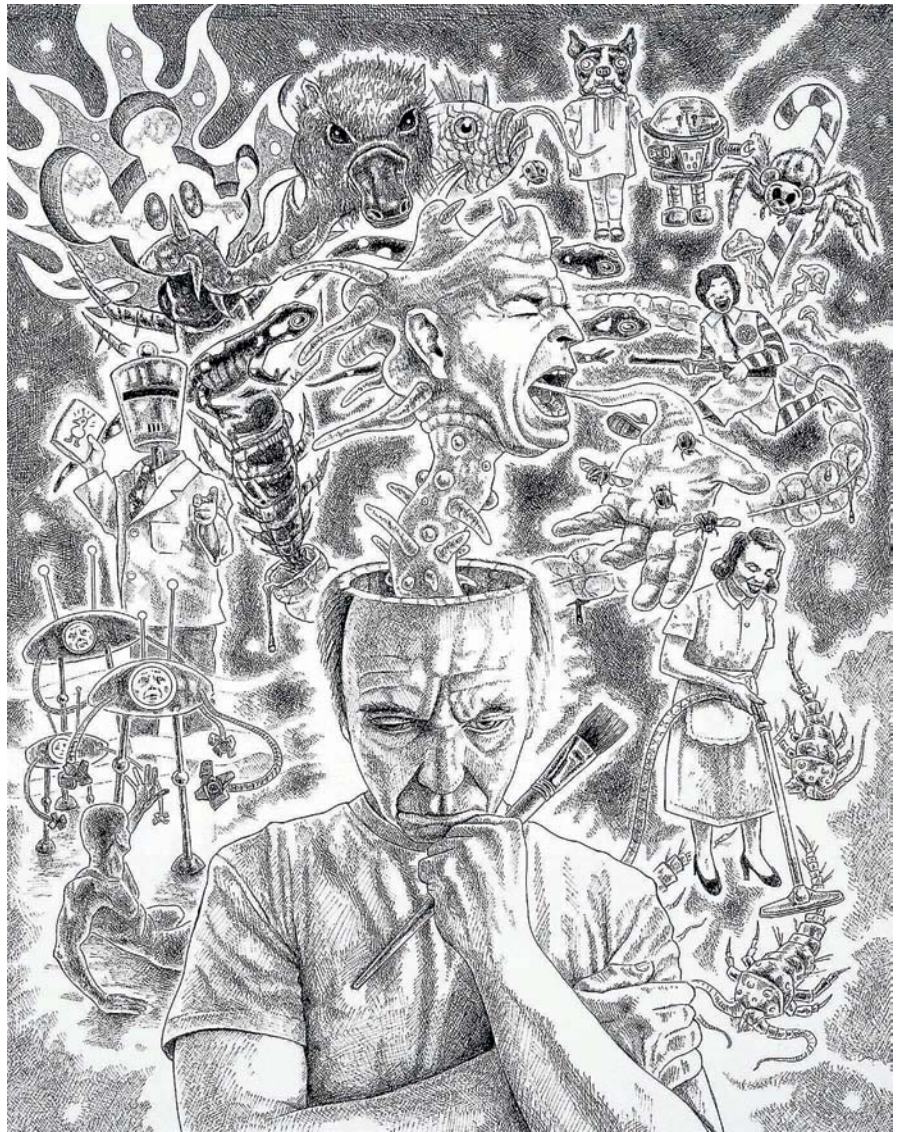
This scenario serves as a perfect metaphor for the struggle I've had as a creative person, with society, my entire fucking life. Seriously. On my gravestone, there should be a confused teacher (or other authority figure) scratching her head while looking at one of my paintings, perhaps mouthing the words, "You can express yourself, but only do it in a way we approve of."

I've been very prolific and active in the arts my entire life despite people like this. I remain true to my creative vision. I don't paint for people who prefer

that my work match their drapes or carpet. I paint for people who appreciate my work for what it is. I'm independent enough in my career that I can pick and choose who I work with and where my art is exhibited. It's beautiful— I'm free to create whatever I want. I'm a very lucky man.

But, getting back to my history as an artist, I was a pretty wild juvenile delinquent. I grew up in an insane neighborhood in Buffalo in the 60's and 70's. My friends and I were in constant trouble with the police. We were never in school. We spent our days wandering the streets of Buffalo in a constant stream of illegal mayhem. Eventually, I ended up in a program for juvenile delinquents on the east side of Buffalo. At this program, one of the teachers noticed my artistic skill, and he connected me with a paid fine arts apprenticeship at a local school. This was a major turning point in my life, both as an artist and as a person. The apprenticeship was with a legendary artist and art teacher in Buffalo named Victor Shanchuk. He taught me to use light as an expressive tool. He taught me the Renaissance-era technique of building a painting in layers of thinned oil paint to achieve photorealistic effects. This experience changed my entire life. It opened my eyes to a whole new way of seeing and painting.

My art from this era is very rebellious and angry. It has a very urban feel to it. It reflects the streetlights, old buildings, taverns, and garbage-strewn streets that I grew up on. While I received praise for my technique, my subject matter raised eyebrows. Not everyone understood it, nor were they comfortable with it. I was faced with the reality (again and again) that my muse was not a lucrative one. I was young and I wanted to go to art school. The older, wiser Victor Shanchuk advised me away from a formal career in art. He advised me to pursue it as a passion instead, as it would allow me more freedom as an artist. While this hurt my feelings at the time, it turned out to be the best advice he could have given me. With a solid job in a different field I would be free



to draw and paint whatever I wanted to, never caring whether or not work sold. I would never have to cater to the subjective whims of an art director or gallery owner. I would have artistic freedom for the rest of my life.

I ended up earning a four-year degree in Criminal Justice, and a masters degree in Counselor Education. For many years, I worked in the inner city in Rochester, N.Y. My specialty was working with emotionally disturbed children and adolescents. I worked with terrible cases of child abuse and neglect every day for years. These were tragic, hopeless situations. It was very sad, difficult work but I was very good at it, and I helped a lot of kids. My art became a kind of therapy for me. It helped me get through the challenges of my day. I worked with terribly violent, sad situations all day long, then I drew and painted at night.

Meanwhile, my reputation as an outspoken,

renegade artist grew quickly. After years of working for horror publishers, sci-fi magazines and underground comics, I decided to start showing in galleries. I was an overnight success. My work received public attention very quickly, I had found my target audience. The weirdos, ex-hippy intelligentsia, freaks, and free-thinkers out there became aware of my art, and they loved it. I began to get emails from young art students about my work. Newspapers and magazines interviewed me about my art. It was very dizzying. I was turning people on with my work, and it felt great.

After 12 years of working in the city, I took a job in a small town school district. This was an incredibly dramatic change for me. I had grown up and worked in a hip, urban environment my entire life. The city was in my blood. My new caseload was a mixture trailer park students from extreme rural poverty, and overindulged kids with boats and summer cottages. Unfortunately, I had an ugly tangle with small town politics and ignorance, as the result of a contentious battle in the town about my artwork.

I could never create a painting as surreal, or as illustrative of human ignorance and fear, as the bloodthirsty witch hunt that follows.

For years, I lived two separate lives. I was a respected school counselor in a small town during the day. By night, I was deeply enmeshed the urban art scene in Buffalo and beyond. I was surrounded by tattoo artists, comic book publishers, painters and sculptors. I had a foot in both of these mutually exclusive, yet equally beautiful worlds. I never felt more alive in my life, but I knew it wouldn't last.

A group of narrow-minded conservative parents went to my website and lost their minds. My site was full of blasphemy, sex, nudity, violence and dark

surrealism. Despite the "Mature Content" warnings, and admonishments not to enter my site, they went in anyway, and were offended. They began meeting in the basement of a church. Their anger and hatred spread like a virus through the small town. They went to a school board meeting to complain about my art. They made such a fuss, the superintendent was forced to put me on paid administrative leave. He hated to do it because I was such a valued employee, but his hand was legally forced by these parents. A complaint was sent to the state education department. I was told that my career might be over. I was informed that, since this was a First Amendment issue, the matter would take many years to resolve. None of my lawyers had ever seen a case like mine, so there were no legal precedents to refer to. I had to sit and wait while my case sat on a bureaucrat's desk in Albany—along with hundreds of other cases.

I was emotionally devastated. I was as dedicated to my job as any school counselor who ever lived. I spent years studying my craft. I always took on extra cases, stayed late, never shied away from crisis or conflict, and never complained. I was a good person—never hurt a soul. I had dedicated decades of my life to helping children. None of this mattered. The families who led this effort against me were influential in the community. They wanted the outspoken agnostic artist removed from their community.

Just to give you an idea of how pathetic this situation was, one of the ringleaders of this endeavor was a woman who once complained about a 1st grade teacher because she allowed her students watch, "James and the Giant Peach." Apparently, Disney movies cause spiritual damage to children. I was unaware of this. She was a militant Christian. We all laughed at her behind her back. Nobody took her seriously. She actually went door to door

in the small town, asking parents to join her in her cause to have me removed. Another complainant was a salon owner in a nearby village; once again, a militant Christian do-gooder with limited exposure to the outside world. Others got involved: the town physician, a Napoleonic little tyrant with a bad reputation (every town has one), an emotionally regressed classroom aide with the intellect of a wet sock, the pastor at the local church—and last but not least, a few school board members.

In a small town with a five mile radius, these people are known and they have power. They huddle together



The Whole World is Watching Ink on paper 11" x 17"



Don't Forget The Eggs Oil on masonite 20" x 16"

in churches, board meetings and soccer fields, gleeful in their moral superiority— sharing vicious secrets-- unaware that no one knows or cares about them beyond the fetid box of ignorance they inhabit.

After two years of waiting, I was informed that the State Education Department declined a ruling in my case. I was vindicated. It was over. I won. Nervous about infringing on my civil rights, the investigator in Albany didn't want to touch my case with a 10 foot pole. I returned back to work, and am working happily with the best team of people I've worked with in my entire career. I am very lucky. As I write this, I will soon be entering my last year of employment. I retire in 2019, and am planning on blissfully painting all night and day, until I drop dead.

Now—here's where the moral for my fellow creators begins: I never let these ignorant bigots stop me from painting; not once. In fact, while on leave, I tripled my creative output. I had a constant stream of exhibits, shows, books and new projects happening all the time. I painted and drew like a madman—late into the night. The people who did this will never be known

by anyone beyond the little town they live in; safe and cloistered from external reality. By contrast, my art has turned people on throughout the world. I teach painting techniques to my students, do art for the school I work in, and I've just had a major gallery show in the very town that this happened in. These people didn't slow my creative spirit down one bit, and they never will.

Struggles like this should be expected if we shine our light strong and bright. I have the ability to reach into the depths of my subconscious mind, pull images out and show them to you. For some reason, this scares people who think that a man with a pointy stick lives underground. While it's brought my art fans happiness, and me endless joy, some people see this as dangerous. Ignore these people. They are not important. Shine your light! Keep painting!

This little light of mine—I'm gonna let it shine, shine, SHINE!

seanmaddenart.com



Binky's Dream Oil on masonite 20" x 16"

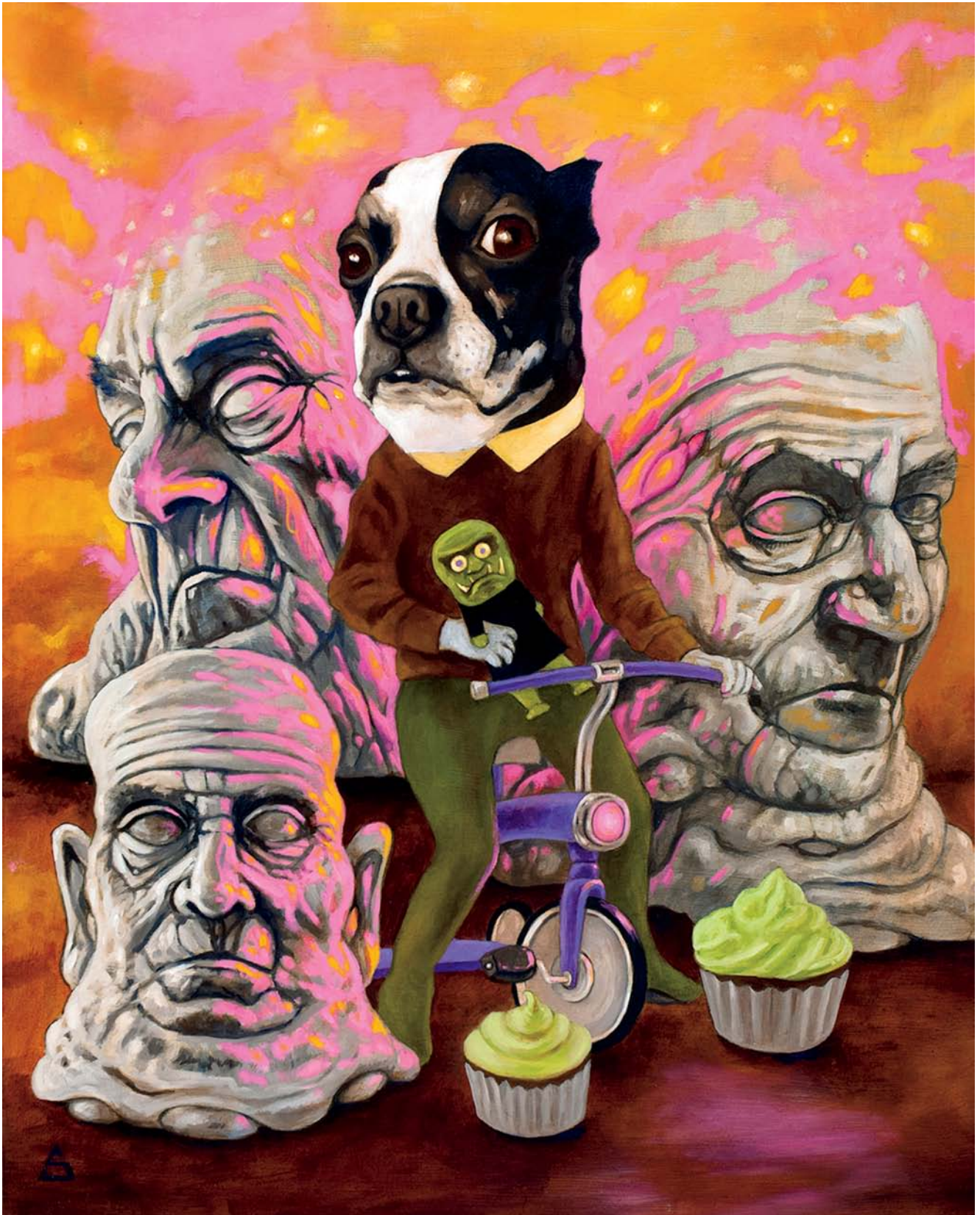


Evelyn, the Modified Dog, Oil on masonite, 12" x 9"

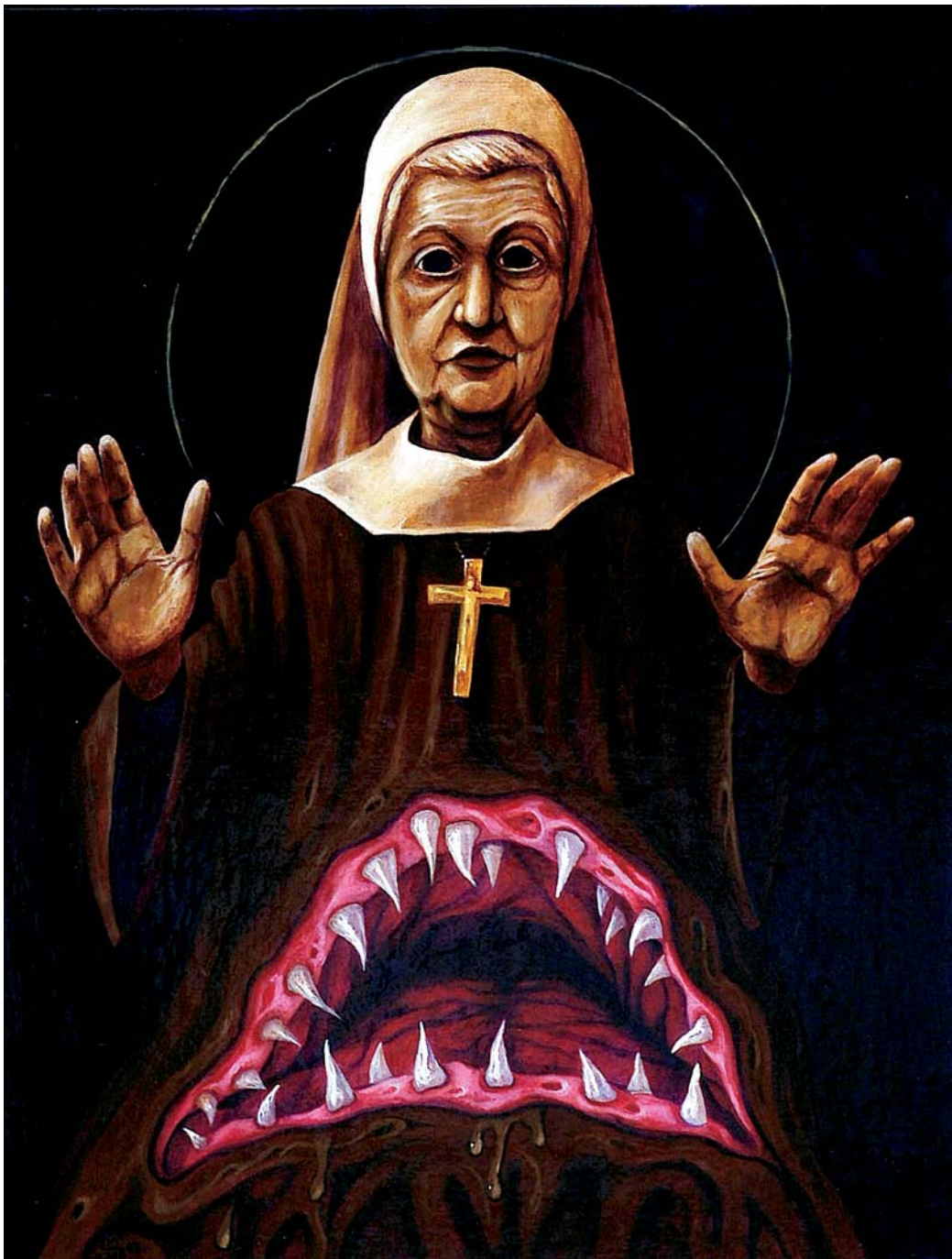
I recommend the viewer listen to the album "One Size Fits All," by Frank Zappa. This is the way I see Evelyn, the Modified Dog.



The Grand Vizier's Garden Party Oil on canvas 20" x 16"



Stewie Oil on masonite 16" x 20"



Monster Nun Oil on masonite 20" x 16"

When I was four, I sat in a church pew with a small, plastic statuette of Mary in my tiny hands. I made the mistake of putting my thumb over Mary's face. When a nun came up to yell at me, you would have thought that I shot the actual Mary in the face with a flamethrower. The nun went insane. She screamed and ranted at me, her flabby jowls shook as she screamed. I'll never forget it.

The statuette was made of plastic in a factory by a machine, through the process of hot injection molding. After it cooled, it was dumped into a box with hundreds of other similar statuettes. It arrived to the church in a delivery truck. It had no magical qualities whatsoever. People this vicious and ignorant will never receive my respect, whether or not they're dressed as a giant penguin. As long as we treat people like this with reverence, we will never advance as a society.



Satan for President, Oil on masonite, 18” x 24”

A few years ago, as I was walking out of a supermarket I saw a “Jesus for President” sticker on a car. This annoyed me for a multitude of obvious reasons, foremost among them being that I would rather die than live in a fundamentalist theocracy. I also wondered why this bumper sticker is so acceptable to people. Surely, there must be others who find this bumper sticker offensive? I wondered what would happen if someone made a “Satan for President” poster. I quickly found out, when I made such a poster and began to receive hate mail and anonymous prank phone calls at my home. I found out that people take their moral superiority, their worship of symbols, and their importance, far too seriously.

This is the first in a long series of paintings that will be created in a number of different art mediums (pen and ink, oils, acrylics, etc.), for years to come. I will market this image far and wide, largely to people who aren’t afraid to think for themselves.



Lightheaded Oil on masonite 14" x 11"



In Praise of Auditory Hallucinations Oil on masonite 20" x 16"



Capitalism Does Not Care for Kids, 18" x 24"

If turning babies into cigar lighters made a profit, we'd be watching Baby Lighter commercials on TV all day long. Happy Meals, violent video games, breakfast cereal with buckets of sugar in it--- all evidence to me that the stupidity and morbid obesity of children is not enough to stop people from cashing checks. To make things worse-- we don't raise kids to be conscious consumers. There's big money in keeping people stupid, unhealthy and obedient.



Meat Rations Oil on masonite 20" x 16"



The Man with the Little Girl Face Oil on masonite 14" x 11"



The Muffin Man, Oil on panel, 14" x 11"

The Muffin Man was painted for a Frank Zappa themed show that I had at the Hyeana Gallery in Burbank back in 2013. My task was to develop 20 paintings based on old Zappa tunes. The Muffin Man was an obvious choice. A month after the show closed, I received a voicemail from Gail Zappa, informing me that she loved the art I did for the show. This meant a great deal to me, as her husband's music was a major source of creative inspiration to me growing up.



Buffy's New Tentacles Ink and wash on illustration board 11" x 17"



Squidboy Oil on masonite 9" x 12"



The Telltale Heart Oil on masonite 20" x 16"



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